

STATE OF MAINE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 97-377

June 22, 1999

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Investigation of Bangor Hydro-Electric Company's
Quality of Service to Customers Along Route 172
in the Towns of Surry and Blue Hill

ORDER APPROVING
STIPULATION

WELCH, Chairman; NUGENT and DIAMOND, Commissioners

On July 1, 1997, the Commission opened an investigation into the quality of electric service provided by Bangor Hydro-Electric Company (BHE) to customers located along Route 172 in the Towns of Surry and Blue Hill. The investigation was initiated in response to allegations of substandard service, specifically the repeated occurrence of intense power surges caused by contact between 35 kV transmission lines and distribution lines. Along a portion of Route 172 in the Towns of Blue Hill and Surry, the transmission and distribution lines are hung from the same poles (an industry practice known as "overbuild"). As a result of automobile accidents, fallen tree limbs or other causes, the transmission lines sometimes contacted the distribution lines. The resulting power surges caused severe damage to several customers' appliances and electronic devices. The allegations were detailed at a public hearing held in Blue Hill on May 16, 1997. Following an additional public meeting in Blue Hill and several negotiating sessions, all parties agreed on a stipulation (attached) to resolve the issues presented in this case.

The proposed stipulation notes the measures that BHE has already taken in response to the complaints. These actions include the placement of covered (insulated) conductors for the distribution line along Route 172 to prevent accidental contact with the transmission conductors. BHE also offset the phases between the transmission and distribution lines to minimize the potential for future accidental contact. BHE also placed covered conductor wire along a portion of the connecting Turkey Farm Road, conducted substantial tree trimming along Route 172 and the Turkey Farm Road, and inspected and repaired the distribution equipment in the same area. Finally, BHE offered affected customers free whole-house surge suppressors, replaced most lightning arrestors on the distribution circuit, and advised customers of the desirability and proper use of additional point-of-use surge suppressors for sensitive equipment.

The stipulation provides for an 8-month trial period (beginning April 1, 1999) to monitor the effectiveness of BHE's actions. During the trial period, BHE will file monthly reports with the Commission. BHE agrees to promptly investigate customer complaints and include a description of any complaints and their resolution in the monthly reports. The parties agree to meet after November 1, 1999 to discuss any remaining issues. BHE also agrees to continue its investigation of the cause of recent power surges

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR: Welch
Nugent
Diamond

NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO REVIEW OR APPEAL

5 M.R.S.A. § 9061 requires the Public Utilities Commission to give each party to an adjudicatory proceeding written notice of the party's rights to review or appeal of its decision made at the conclusion of the adjudicatory proceeding. The methods of adjudicatory proceedings are as follows:

1. Reconsideration of the Commission's Order may be requested under Section 6(N) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (65-407 C.M.R.11) within 20 days of the date of the Order by filing a petition with the Commission stating the grounds upon which consideration is sought.
2. Appeal of a final decision of the Commission may be taken to the Law Court by filing, within 30 days of the date of the Order, a Notice of Appeal with the Administrative Director of the Commission, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (1)-(4) and the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 73 et seq.
3. Additional court review of constitutional issues or issues involving the justness or reasonableness of rates may be had by the filing of an appeal with the Law Court, pursuant to 35-A M.R.S.A. § 1320 (5).

Note:

The attachment of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the particular document may be subject to review or appeal. Similarly, the failure of the Commission to attach a copy of this Notice to a document does not indicate the Commission's view that the document is not subject to review or appeal.